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ABSTRACT

Communication between secondary schools and community, technical, and junior colleges regarding entrance/exit requirements, preparation, degree requirements, etc., is needed to help students succeed in their postsecondary educational goals. Recent education reform reports have emphasized the need for more substance and structure in the high school program--a need which is evidenced by the facts that: (1) high school dropouts are returning to school at the community college level; (2) nearly two-thirds of high school dropouts come from the general education program; (3) the 20 fastest growing occupations prefer job applicants to have postsecondary education and training; and (4) American business and industry spends $30 million a year on the education and training of 11 million employees. To deal with the problem of unfocused learning and encourage a greater degree of connectedness between the classroom and "real life," a four-year tech-prep/associate degree program could be developed. These articulated programs would begin in the junior year of high school and continue through an associate degree program. Such programs would address a number of the problems threatening educational excellence today, including lack of curricular coordination between high schools and two-year colleges; lack of continuity in learning; and poor high school preparation for college. The challenge for educators today is to develop a coordinated curriculum that provides more substance and structure in the educational program to develop the human resources that support the strength and vitality of the nation. (EJV)

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THE HIGH SCHOOL/COMMUNITY COLLEGE CONNECTION

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Paper presented at a COMBASE Symposium
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The High School/Community College Connection

The roots of the community college grow deep into the secondary schools, yet in many instances the communication between and among these two segments of education is sparse and limited.

Community, technical, and junior colleges can be proud of the open-door label. They have opened the door of opportunity for millions of Americans. Higher education will never be the same because of these open doors . . . and they must remain open. But, the open admissions policy has given some high school students an unintended negative signal. As a result, for some students the open door becomes a revolving door . . . easy in and quickly out. The open door never has meant that high school students can prepare as they please and still succeed in a community college program . . . ready or not.

Have community, technical, and junior colleges failed to give high school students, and their parents, clear signals as to provide an adequate high school program of preparation for career, as well as university-parallel programs? Do open-door colleges have a responsibility to state clearly to high school students, the exit requirements for each and every community college program including the requirements to earn an associate degree?

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High school students and their parents, plus high school faculty and counselors, deserve to know about community college program exit standards . . . about associate degree requirements . . . about study requirements . . . about rigors involved in completing any community college program. The reluctance of some community, technical, and junior college leaders to be directive in their communications with their high school colleagues is an entirely honorable reluctance. They have not wanted to be overbearing or appear to be telling another segment of education how to run their business. But they should know that most high school administrators have no such fear. Indeed, high school leaders are looking to higher education at all levels for clarity in communications about the preparation requirements that will help students succeed in their next steps. The student must be placed at the center of concern.

We have been pushing the idea of the high school/community college connection, and this fall we will be publishing a book on the subject of "The Neglected Majority." The neglected majority means the middle 50 percent of any high school student body. We feel that in most of the recent education reform reports they have really overlooked the middle quartiles of any given high school student body, a group I call the neglected majority. Let me be quick to say that the baccalaureate degree bound student must also be a target of concern for any cooperative program between high schools and community, technical, and junior colleges. Programs for these students may take the form of advanced placement, or early registration, or dual enrollments and several other approaches to academic honors programs. Programs for the academically talented are more important today than ever before. However, there are also some other students needing an excellent education.

I believe I can sum up most of the reform reports with two words. They are calling for more substance in the American educational program particularly at the high school level, and they are calling for more structure in the school program. Report after report is saying we want more substance in the program, that means a math base, science base, literacy base for all students, and we want more program structure. Potluck in the schoolhouse is no longer sufficient, where students take a little of this, take a little of that, but do not experience a focused program.

Here are some facts that have greatly influenced my thinking. Most of this information comes from the National Center for Educational Statistics, and a special study sponsored by NCES called "High School and Beyond," a follow-up of recent high school graduates.

1. Out of 40 million students in the elementary and secondary schools of this country, 11 million will not complete high school. The high school dropout rate has increased 1 percent per year over the last 5 years. We are now at a national 27 percent dropout rate of those who start high school as opposed to those that complete high school. The community colleges will get many of those students 5 years later. They come to the college and say, "What'll I do with my life?" All of a sudden they look up and realize they have a whole life ahead of them and they are not prepared to do much of anything. And so it becomes a rescue effort. In an information age with a society where technology is increasingly pervasive do we have the luxury of continuing down this path? Technology is pervasive in our society, but it has breadth and width.

You can no longer be an auto technician and just deal with dirty knuckles. You must also know about science, about electronics, and be literate.

2. Fifty-five percent of entering freshmen in all of higher education now begin their college careers in community, technical, or junior colleges.
3. Eighty-three percent of the current adult population do not hold bachelor degrees.
4. As reported by the high-school graduates in the National Longitudinal Study of the Class of 1980, programs of study completed were:

Academic (college prep)	- 37%
Vocational	- 19%
General	- 42%
Unreported	- 2%

5. Nearly two-thirds of the high school drop-outs come from the general education program.
6. The Southern Regional Education Board reports that less than 1 percent of the high school students in vocational programs are involved in technical education programs.
7. The American Electronic Association report entitled "Technical Employment Projects, 1983-1987" indicates that the electronics industry will need 60 percent more technicians by 1987 than were employed in 1983. That means 115,000 new electronic technician jobs will be needed by 1987, in addition to other worker replacements.

8. The 20 fastest growing occupations in 1982-1995 all prefer post-secondary education and training, e.g., computer science technician, office machine service technician, engineering technician,

9. Private-sector employment growth in the future will be in companies with 50 or fewer employees.

10. The associate degree is becoming the preferred degree for entry into many technician occupations.

11. American private-sector business and industry spend an estimated $30 billion a year on the education and training of 11 million employees.

12. A recent Penn State University study indicates that 90 percent of entering college students in 1982 and 1983 expect a B average in college. Sixty-one percent estimated they would study fewer than 20 hours per week.

13. The same Penn State study found that 80 percent of entering college students said they knew little or nothing about their choice of major.

14. All who will be in the work force by the year 2000 are alive today.

During my years as a high school principal I developed the perception that the senior year was a waste of time for far too many students. Too many students came up to that high school senior year only needing to complete a couple of courses to meet their requirements for a high school diploma. Hold that perception against the perception of many of my college colleagues, particularly in technical education, across the country saying, "Dale, you've got to start talking about, and start preaching, a 3-year technical education program. With the quality of the student coming to us, we simply cannot get it done in 2 years. When you move into programs like Robotics Technology, Laser Technology, or even some of the more traditional technical education

programs like Diesel Technology, Aircraft Technology and Associate Degree Nursing, it is just no longer possible to complete a quality program in 2 years." But my answer to them is this. Let's do better than that!

I'm going to advocate a 4-year program. Why can't we make better use of the junior year and senior year in high school, along with grades 13 and 14? Can't we get together with out colleagues at the high school level, forgetting the "turf" arguments and decide we're just going to work on behalf of our students. Can't we agree upon a coordinated curricular program that would begin in grade 11, and continuing on through the associate degree. It would be a program with structure and much substance. When I talk about substance I'm not talking about more theoretical physics. I really believe that we may be creating the crisis of the 1990's if we follow <u>all</u> of the recommendations of the current reform reports. I feel strongly that the people who wrote most of those reports are well-meaning individuals who have experienced the baccalaureate and graduate degree programs. They think the world looks and acts like them, when in fact, the majority of Americans do not look and act them. The 1980 census revealed that only 17 percent of the American population 25 years of age and over have a baccaluareate degree. Now that means that 83 percent of the adult population do not have a baccalaureate degree. Now let's be optimistic and say that the 1990 census reveals a dramatic leap and goes to 25 percent of our adult population with baccalaureate degrees. That still means that 75 percent, 3 out of 4 Americans, will not have a baccalaureate degree in 1990. And we must ask ourselves the question, "How can we assure the 75 percent of the American population that do not have a baccalaureate degree, excellence in education?

Can we make winners out of ordinary students?" Reform reports didn't talk very much about what I would call the ordinary high school student. In too many cases the reform reports seem to indicate that more theoretical physics is the answer. The nonbaccalaureate degree students need more physics, but they don't need more theoretical physics. They need applied physics, applied math, communication skills, some humanities, as well as solid technical education.

Education must develop a greater degree of connectedness, connecting real life with what goes on in the classroom. One of the great values of vocational education is the ability to help students see how they can use what they are learning. If we don't answer the "why" question of students we're failing. And by the way, I don't think we answer the "why" question very well. That doesn't mean that students should not have more of the humanities and more of the liberal arts: I'm a supporter of these programs, but they must be arranged in the context of a program rather than a smorgasbord, and in the context of clear targets and clear goals. If there's one thing that I feel is the enemy of excellence in American education at any level, it's unfocused learning. I've dealt with students in my own family and of course I have experienced many years in the education business. I've concluded that one of the real problems, particularly with high school students, is what I call unfocused learning. Students take courses without any idea how one connects to the other, how those courses connect to the real world, or connect to the next step in learning.

I agree with the general emphasis of the reform reports that say give us more structure and substance in the school and college programs. And so we've

eveloped something that we are loosely calling the tech-prep/associate degree program. This program would begin with grade 11 and move along with clear targets through the associate degree. The associate degree would most likely be the associate in applied science degree, but I could also conceive that they could also earn an associate in science or an associate in arts degree. You can be about as flexible as you want to make it. It could be designed to be a general education program at the secondary level and a technical education program at the community college level. The reverse of this could also be true depending upon facilities and instructor backgrounds. I fully realize that the only safe thing that you can say in this country about high schools and community, technical, and junior colleges is that they are all different. The diversity among schools and colleges is awesome. But that's our strength as community-based kinds of institutions.

We are calling for thousands of roundtable discussions between high school leaders and community college leaders talking about how we can get this job done together -- whether it's the tech-prep/associate degree program... whether it's concentration on the middle 50 percent...emphasis upon advanced placement or whatever. I'm not so concerned about the subject matter as I am that we open the dialogue.

There are currently many good things going on between community colleges and high schools. However, in a recent AACJC survey we found that not much is going on in the area of curricular coordination. There's quite a bit of activity in sharing of facilities, advancement placement, students leaving the high school and taking some classes at the community college while they are

still in high school. But, few community college boards and leaders and high school boards and leaders are sitting down together to develop a policy demand on the systems that direct coordinated curriculums, so that students experience real continuity in learning.

Another enemy of excellence in education at any level is that too many students experience a tremendous loss of continuity in learning, particularly as it relates to the skill-getting processes in education. In particular, too little attention has been given to the loss of continuity in learning from level to level in education. Furthermore, I am amazed some young people learn as much as they do with as much school as they miss. So many students lose continuity because of illness, or because they just plain have lost all interest in school. Unfortunately, we are guilty too often in our own institutions of allowing a continuity gap to exist between the high school and the community college. For some students moving from the high school to college is like climbing Mt. Everest when it ought to be a gentle grade crossing.

It is the responsibility of educators to assure the least loss of continuity in learning as possible. Community colleges must give clear signals to the high school students and their parents and high school faculty about what it takes to make the grade in a community college. I don't really know the answer to this question, but I have pondered several times as to how many high school counselors really do recommend to their high school students that they consider the associate degree? How many high school counselors and faculty really know anything about the associate degree? Now I don't blame them. I blame those of us in the community college movement. Too often we

have not given clear signals about the exit requirements from a good community college program. In fact, I wonder if we have given an unintended negative signal to high school students with the term "open-door college." I have been so proud of that term, and access is a major plank in my belief about the role of community colleges in higher education. But what has happened is that some high school students and their parents, and some high school faculty, have interpreted that to mean, "The high school program doesn't matter because they will always take a student in a community college."

Now, I have no intention of helping to close the open door, and I have no intention of reducing my own personal efforts and the efforts of our association on the subject of access. Opportunity is my favorite American word. As a consequence, I have concluded that "open door" colleges must give better information to high school students and their parents about what it takes to exit a community college program -- not what it takes to enter a community college program. We do have many entry requirements in some community college programs. But, the real payoff in helping improve high school student preparation will come in emphasizing the college program exit requirements. Every community college in the country might think seriously about communicating with eighth graders about appropriate high school preparation. They should know about the requirements to earn an associate degree, whether that's an associate of arts or associate of science, or an associate in applied science degree. Colleges have never been reluctant to tell high school students about the college prep/baccalaureate degree track requirements. The clear signal has been that if you don't take certain courses and have certain experiences while you are in high school you are

likely not to make it through the college prep/baccalaureate program. Why can't we give equally clear signals to high school students and their parents and their faculty about what it takes to make it in technical education?

I don't know the baccalaureate degree four-year college program history. But, I understand it really was developed in the early days of the State of Virginia when the land barons concluded that four years was about all they could support their n'er-do-well sons who were at William and Mary College. Whether that little piece of historical trivia is true or not I don't know, but what's wrong with a new four-year technical education program that would be closely coordinated with our high school colleagues? I call this approach a new kind of vocational education . . . a much broader vocational education. We do a young 16 year old high school student a tremendous disservice by narrow, specific job training at the high school level. I think that narrows a person down when we ought to be opening the world up to them, and we ought to be helping young people develop the broad competencies that deal with modern life, not a life that was, but a life that is to come. That will mean a much broader technical education. Unfortunately, we have built too many walls between the practical arts, the liberal arts and the fine arts, when, in fact, all of us need all three, and we need experiences in all three. The technicians of the future will need a broad education rather than a more narrow education.

John Naisbitt has said that you can give the occupational history of this country with three words -- farmer, laborer, and clerk. These three words will also tell you much about the economic history of this country. He goes on to speculate what the next word will be. And I am going to speculate

with you today that I think the next word will be technician, and we're already in the midst of this change. John Naisbitt has said that we are living in the time of the parenthesis, the time of in-between. I think we are just in-between what we could call the clerk, where the predominance of people in the workforce are working in white collar clerical type occupations, and the gray collar technician. In the Washington, D.C.-Beltway area, we have already passed that mark where the largest single segment of the workforce are technicians.

We have a tremendous challenge in the education business today. It is also a wonderful opportunity to develop a win-win situation. I can't see who would lose by high schools and community colleges working together. There will be tremendous competition for the high school students of the future. Let me give you one statistic. The military now estimates that it must recruit one out of eight high school male graduates to maintain quotas. They estimate that ratio will move to one out of three by 1990. Now if the military comes even close to that target, competition for the high school student will be brisk. Add to that statistic the tremendous competition for students by the four year colleges and universities, and by employers. With the shrinking pool of 17- to 21-year olds the competition will be keen. It is interesting that there is not nearly as much competition for that student that sits in the middle 50 percent of any high school student body. The high school/community college connection has a wonderful opportunity to develop a better education program, help the high schools develop a better atmosphere for learning, develop a coordinated curriculum that does something about continuity in learning, that does something about a focused education,

provides more structure and substance in the educational program, that popularize the associate degrees, and in many cases helps individuals go on to the baccalaureate degree. And I'm not just sure who would lose in that proposition. I call that a win-win situation.

As a result of our thinking on this subject, allow me to share with you a "Seven C" evaluation template to lay over your educational programs.

1. Center our concern upon the needs of all students, rather than just some students.
2. Continuity in learning is a responsibility of the educator. We must worry about what has gone on before, and what will come after.
3. Clear signals must be given about community college exit requirements.
4. Connect the practical arts with the needs of real life . . . with the liberal arts, with the fine arts.
5. Completion of a program is important for the student. Earning the certificate or the degree can be a quality assurance program for employers or for universities.
6. Congruence and coherence are important concepts in program coordination. Is there congruence between what we say and what we do as educators? Is there congruence between our programs and the real life needs? What is your vision of an educated person? Is there program coherence leading to that vision?
7. Competence is at the bottom of all the education effort. Does your program help students develop demonstrated knowledge and skills? Is that competence tested and recognized?

As a political scientist, as well as an educator, I understand the often conflicting demands made upon our schools and colleges. There is much special pleading for one special interest or another. Yet, I speak today without reservation because I speak upon behalf of the student . . . our most important national resource. We are either totally committed to providing quality education for all our students, or we are not. We are either prepared to provide all our students with the chance to move into the economic mainstream . . . as higher education has helped you and me . . . or we are not.

We are either prepared to match the needs of real life with the educational needs of our students . . . or we are not. We are either prepared to provide all our students with the opportunity to share in the good life . . . to become independent and thinking citizens in this great land . . . or we are not. We will either help our students develop the competencies to function as independent and producing citizens, or we will pay the bills for not doing so later. We will invest in developing our human resources now, or we will waste these precious resources and thereby diminish the capacity of individual lives and the strength and vitality of our nation.

I am confident you have accepted the challenge and seized the moment. We choose hope over hopelessness, opportunity over oppression, and wisdom over waste.

ERIC CLEARINGHOUSE
FOR JUNIOR COLLEGES
OCT 4 1985